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## **MS-13 LEADER SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON ON FIREARM CHARGE**

### ***Defendant Also Sentenced to 20 Years in Prison For Involvement in RICO Conspiracy***

WASHINGTON – A leader of the gang La Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, was sentenced today to life in prison for using a firearm in the commission of a violent crime, and to a 20-year term, to be served consecutively, for his participation in a racketeering enterprise, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Edward M. Yarbrough of the Middle District of Tennessee. Oscar Serrano, a/k/a Diablin, was sentenced in Nashville, Tenn., by Chief U.S. District Judge Todd J. Campbell of the Middle District of Tennessee. Serrano was also sentenced to two concurrent terms of supervised release of five and three years following his prison term.

At his plea hearing on July 28, 2008, Serrano admitted that, as a leader of MS-13, he conspired with others to participate in a pattern of racketeering activity in the Nashville metropolitan area that included murder, attempted murder and witness tampering. Serrano admitted that in addition to personally committing various acts of violence, he exercised his leadership by enforcing the rules of MS-13 and inciting other members to attack and kill rival gang members.

Serrano admitted that on Oct. 16, 1998, he and other MS-13 gang members shot an individual who refused to give money to the MS-13 gang. Serrano also admitted that on Dec. 18, 2005, he and other MS-13 gang members attempted to kill rival gang members outside a nightclub in Nashville by firing handguns at them. In addition, Serrano admitted that on Feb. 17, 2006, he and other MS-13 gang members conspired to kill rival gang members by shooting them at another Nashville-area nightclub. Serrano further admitted that in the spring of 2006, he and other MS-13 gang members attempted to kill rival gang members through the use of firearms at the intersection of Nolensville Road and Glenrose Avenue in Nashville. In addition, Serrano admitted that on May 21, 2006, he and other MS-13 gang members fired a handgun at an individual who was suspected of being a member of the rival street gang Brown Pride. The victim was struck and wounded in the arm. Finally, Serrano admitted that on May 22, 2006, he and other MS-13 gang members fired a handgun at an individual they suspected was a confidential informant who had previously provided information about MS-13 activities in Maryland to federal law enforcement authorities.

Serrano is the eleventh defendant to be sentenced on RICO charges stemming from an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Nashville on Jan. 10, 2007. That indictment charged 14 members of MS-13 with conspiring to participate in the affairs of a racketeering enterprise and related charges including murder, attempted murder, assault, weapons charges and obstruction of justice.

All fourteen defendants have pled guilty in the case. Ten other defendants were previously sentenced to prison after pleading guilty to the RICO conspiracy. Walter Hernandez was sentenced on March 31, 2008, to 324 months in prison. On Dec. 3 and Dec. 7, 2007, respectively, Henry Garballo-Vasquez and Jose Alfaro were sentenced to 240 months in prison. On Nov. 20, 2007, Geovanni Pena received a sentence of 235 months in prison. On Sept. 8, 2008, Ericka Cortez received a sentence of 46 months in prison. On September 16, 2008, Escolastico Serrano received a sentence of 45 years in prison. On September 25, Ronald Fuentes received a sentence of life in prison. On Oct. 3, 2008, Ernesto Isai Mendez-Tovar was a sentenced to 13 years in prison. On Oct. 6, 2008, Eliseo Iglesias received a sentence of 210 months in prison. On Oct. 7, 2008, David Alexander Gonzalez received a sentence of 235 months in prison.

According to the indictment, the MS-13 gang is a violent international criminal organization composed primarily of immigrants or descendants of immigrants from El Salvador. The purpose of the racketeering enterprise was to preserve and protect the power, territory and profits of the MS-13 enterprise through violent assault, murder, threats of violence and intimidation.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jimmie Lynn Ramsaur of the Middle District of Tennessee and Trial Attorney John Han from the Criminal Division's Gang Squad.

The case was investigated by the Criminal Division's Gang Squad; the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Tennessee; the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department's Gang Suppression Unit; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and the Davidson County District Attorney General's Office.

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